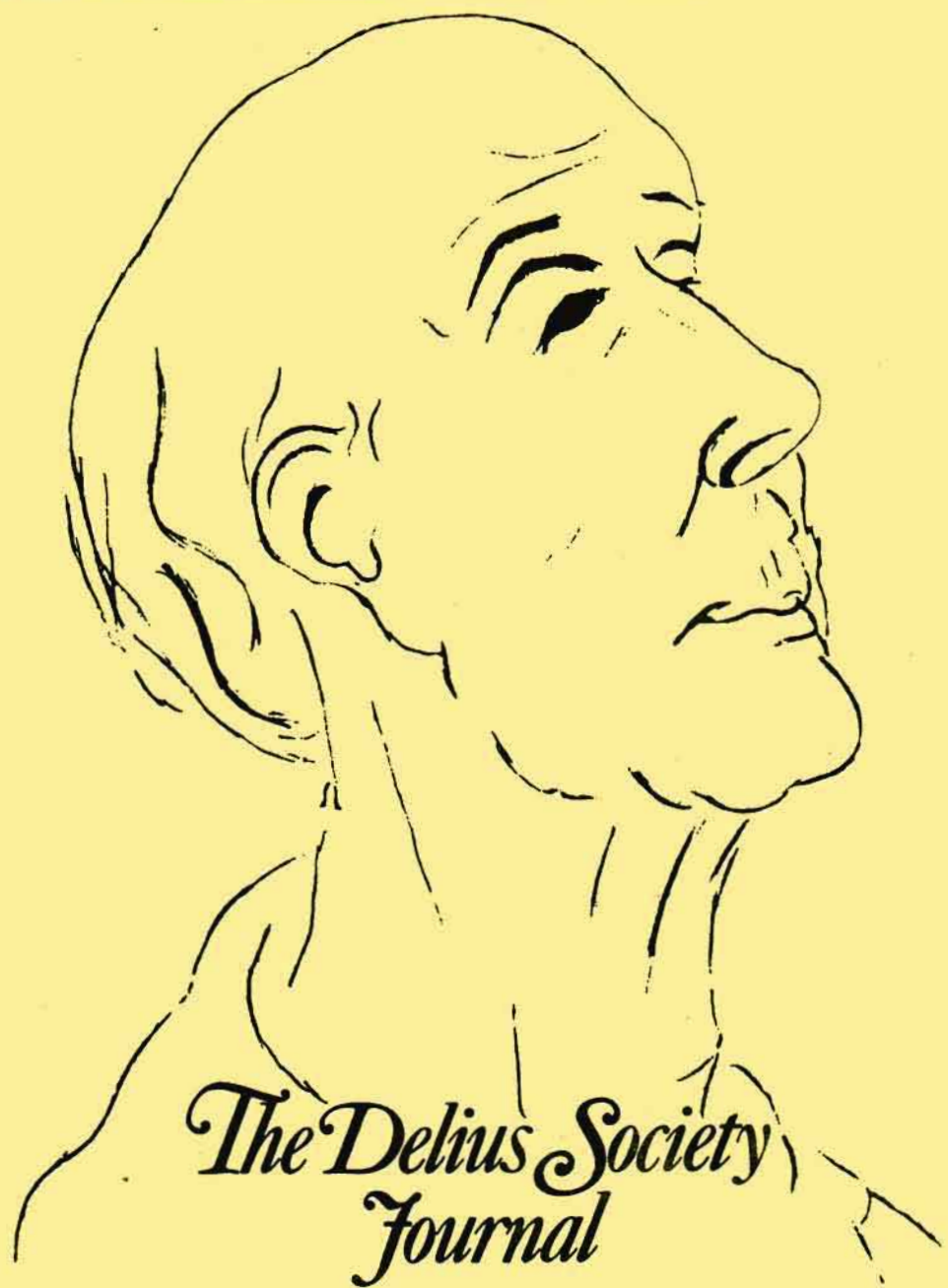

July 1980, Number 68



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The Delius Society

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The Delius Society
Journal

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EDITORIAL

Mention was made in the last *Journal* of Dr. Eric Fenby's work on the score of *A Mass of Life*. The performance given under Alan Barlow by the Finchley Choral Society at Borehamwood on 1st March was the first to utilize the reduced scoring recently prepared by Dr. Fenby in order to ensure authentic balance when less than the composer's original full complement is available. In this version the wind is reduced from 3 flutes to 2 (including piccolo), 3 oboes to 2, 3 bassoons to 2, 6 horns to 4, and 4 trumpets to 3. The bass oboe doubling cor anglais, 3 clarinets and bass clarinet, contrabassoon, 3 trombones and tuba remain as in the original, as do all the other departments. The reduced version is available on hire from Boosey & Hawkes like the original.

* * * *

Another and even more important task recently brought to a successful conclusion by our President must now be placed on record. For many years the whereabouts of the original MS full score of Delius's fifth opera, *Margot la Rouge*, has been unknown, although it had been used by Eric Fenby during his years at Grez when preparing the *Idyll* under the composer's supervision: about two-fifths of the original music was incorporated into the latter work. At the instigation of the Delius Trust, Dr. Fenby has now completed the score of a reconstruction of the whole opera, which otherwise existed only in vocal score form (the latter from the hand of no less than Maurice Ravel). It is felt that Dr. Fenby's version will have an authority second only to Delius's original; and, in the continued absence of the latter, a performance of the former will surely be arranged before too long. Only then will an informed view of Delius's complete dramatic *oeuvre*, in all its hitherto-unsuspected variety, be possible—on the basis of live sound rather than of printed pages or, even worse, hearsay. We rejoice in the fruitful outcome of this latest of the many services performed for Delius by his disciple, especially as we know that his health in the past year has not always been good. May we now eagerly hope for news of the completion of Dr. Fenby's long-awaited monograph on the music itself and its fitting performance?

* * * *

Those members who have nothing better to do than watch such television programmes as *This Is Your Life* were richly rewarded on 7th May when the subject was Cathleen Nesbitt, the 91-year old actress who played the part of Yasmin in the original London production of *Hassan*. The most interesting part of the programme was the showing of a short excerpt from that production, filmed in September 1923. Further enquiries revealed that it was taken from a Pathé News production, *This Was Yesterday*, and the possibility of a private viewing is being investigated. The whole film sequence lasted only a matter of minutes and was, of course, silent. In the television showing, some of the recent LP was dubbed.

* * * *

Malcolm Walker reports that Richard Hickox is scheduled to record *Appalachia* and *Sea Drift* with John Shirley-Quirk and the Royal

Philharmonic Orchestra for Decca. The recording is being sponsored by Cannon Business Machines (UK) Ltd.

* * * *

I hear from Mr. Richard Newman that he is in contact with a firm who will import records from America which are not always available in the UK. At the moment they are able to obtain the recordings by Sir Charles Groves of *Songs of Sunset*, *Cynara* and *An Arabesque*; by Meredith Davies of the *Requiem* and the *Idyll*; and by Sir Malcolm Sargent of *Songs of Farewell* and the 'Cello Concerto. Delivery takes 2-3 months and a £2 deposit is required with each order. I would suggest that interested members write directly to Mr. Newman at 16, Kingsley Road, Horley, Surrey, with their deposits. Prices are likely to be comparable with those of a full-priced British LP.

* * * *

We are always delighted to hear of the achievements of musicians within the Delius Society, and so it was good to learn of a performance of a sonata movement for violin and piano entitled *Homage to Delius* by Miss Desirée Martin, given at the West Somerset Arts Society programme at Minehead on 24th April. *The West Somerset Free Press* reported "The pastoral, idyllic quality which characterises *Brigg Fair* and much more of the composer's music was admirably captured in this short piece."

For the same reason we can be very proud that one of our members, the conductor John Michael East, is the dedicatee of Malcolm Williamson's Fifth Symphony.

* * * *

At the time of going to press, the present Musicians' Union strike has put the 1980 Promenade season in jeopardy. On the assumption that the concert on 25th August in which Julian Lloyd-Webber plays the Delius 'Cello Concerto, will take place as planned, arrangements have been made for members to meet in the Henry Cole room for interval refreshments. We have been quoted a competitive price of 30p. for coffee and biscuits (the normal charge would be 50p.).

Would members requiring interval refreshments kindly contact the Hon. Secretary, 22 Kingsbury Road, Colindale, London, NW9 0RR, on receiving this notification. Members are sometimes slow to respond to such invitations, and may feel even less inclined to do so with so much uncertainty about the Promenade season at present, but please help the Hon. Secretary as much as you can on this.

The Henry Cole room is located on the Grand Tier level, between boxes 15 and 16, but on the opposite side of the corridor. (From the Balcony and Gallery, this room is unfortunately only accessible by going out of the Hall and re-entering at door No. 4.)

If the Promenade Concerts do take place Delius will also be represented on the last night, when Brian Rayner Cook is due to sing *Sea Drift* under Sir Charles Mackerras. He is a conductor whose name has not been associated with the music of Delius, but who is scheduled to direct performances of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at Zurich in December.

* * * *

Regrettably the news reported in our last issue that *Koanga* would be produced at the London Coliseum during the 1980-81 season was already outdated by the time that it appeared in print. Two productions have had to be axed from that season's plans for economy reasons, and *Koanga* was one of the unlucky ones.

* * * *

Once again it is necessary to report the deaths of several people whose names will be familiar to members of the Delius Society. On 13th April Humphrey Proctor-Gregg died at the age of 84. He worked with Sir Thomas Beecham and compiled a fascinating book in his memory, besides being closely associated with opera production in this country for many years. On 24th April Elsie Suddaby died, aged 88. She recorded *Twilight Fancies* with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Early in June occurred the death of Ernest Chapman, an early member of the Society. He was 65.

* * * *

The book *A Delius Companion*, edited by Christopher Redwood and published by John Calder Ltd, is to be reprinted later this year, both in paperback and hardback. The paperback edition, due in August, will cost £3.95 and the casebound is due in November at £9.95. The latter will also be published for the first time in the USA by the Riverrun Press Inc., 175 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

* * * *

Members will receive in due course the minutes of the 1980 AGM. One of the most notable disclosures was that the Society ended the 1979-80 financial year with a deficit, and there was therefore no alternative to raising the subscription. With effect from 1st April 1981 this will be £7 to UK members, with half-rates for students and senior citizens. Meanwhile, the Hon. Treasurer tells me that there is an astonishing figure of nearly a hundred members who have not yet raised their standing orders from £3 to £5 since the subscription went up two years ago! As writing to each of them individually costs a great deal in postage, as well as extra work for the Treasurer, it would be very helpful if members who pay by standing order would check the amount they pay.

* * * *

Also at the AGM I announced that owing to pressure of other commitments I would no longer be able to continue as Editor of *The Delius Society Journal*. As the present issue will be my last, I would like to express my gratitude to all those members who have so regularly kept me supplied with articles and information over the past seven years, and to hope that they will continue to render the same service for my successor. At the time of going to press the post remains vacant, and we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who feels that they may be able to assist in any way. Editorial assistance, without necessarily taking on the total responsibility, would be greatly appreciated.

CHRISTOPHER W. REDWOOD.

Delius, his Sister and his Songs

by CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD

Julius Delius was the father of fourteen children, of whom two died in infancy. Of the remaining dozen, but three were boys (Ernst, Fritz and Max) while the remaining nine, including the six youngest, were all girls. With a spread of twenty-three years between their births it is not surprising that contact between them was often slight, and Frederick Delius seems to have had an affinity only with his sister Clare, four years his junior. One may speculate why this should have been the case; probably the answer is quite simply that he liked her more than the others, but it is tempting to suggest that it was because she, too, possessed musical talent.

According to her own biography, Clare studied singing with a pupil of the famous Mme. Marchesi, but when her teacher suggested to Julius that she should take up singing professionally he threatened to stop her lessons altogether! Assuming Delius knew about this, he could not have failed to sympathise with her. Quite understandably it was not long before Clare began singing her brother's songs, and she was obviously keen for him to write more in this *genre*, for as early as 2nd December 1900 we find him writing to her:

"I have no new songs printed but will send them as soon as they come out."

By 1908 Clare was thinking very seriously of taking up singing as a career, despite being over forty, married and with five children to look after. Her brother was not encouraging. On 18th October of that year he wrote:

"When you write of going in to singing as a profession, I don't think you quite know what sort of difficulties you will encounter. Has your voice had sufficient training? Singing in a drawing room & singing in a Concert Hall with an orchestra, are two entirely different things— In my opinion it is too late to do that sort of thing—And only a few of the most celebrated singers make any money at all. The rest are only too glad to sing in a concert for nothing."

All very sensible advice, from a man who has not always been given his full credit for practical advice to those who asked for it. He then goes on to make some very revealing comments about himself:

"I am not a song writer & those old songs of mine, written 18 & 20 years ago would not be worth while resuscitating."

It says something for Clare's tenacity of purpose that she did not let these comments discourage her and she gave a number of recitals of her brother's songs at the Bradford Arts Club. There was one early in 1911, another on 16th January 1912 and a third on 13th December 1913, and there may have been more. The programme of the second of these contained the following songs:

Der Schlaf
Sing! Sing!
Sehnsucht
Beim Sonnenuntergang
Auf der Reise zur Heimat
Abendstimmung
Plus vite, mon cheval
Il pleure dans mon coeur
Le ciel est par dessus le toit
La lune blanche
Love's philosophy.

It will be observed that the earliest, German titles were used for the first songs in this list, and probably imply that Clare sang them in German. Although Scandinavian poems, they were almost certainly set in German.

The next day *The Yorkshire Observer* wrote:

"In all there is the composer's strong sense of atmosphere and colour, and these were well suggested in their interpretation. Mrs. Black caught the mood and whims of the songs with artistic certainty, and in several instances, notably when the *Sehnsucht* was repeated at the end of the concert, secured a fine dramatic intensity."

The success of these recitals caused Clare to believe that there was a future for her in specializing in the interpretation of her brother's songs, for later in 1912 she had some correspondence with the concert agency Ibbs & Tillet concerning the possibility of presenting such a recital in London at either the Bechstein or Aeolian Hall. She must also have written and told the composer of her intentions and there can be no doubt that his reply, dated 21st May 1912, caused her the greatest disappointment:-

"Dearest Clare—

You would do me the greatest favour by *not* giving a recital of my songs in London—Firstly the songs are quite old—then a recital of songs in London only ought to [be] undertaken by a quite first-class artist—you know very well that you are only an excellent amateur [sic]—& that the chief interest in the concert would be that you are my sister—which makes the whole affair ridiculous—and I am just sure that the less kind part of the Press will draw attention to this. If you wish to take up singing professionally—which I think is a mistake as it is too late—do so by all means—but do not try to "battre monnaie" by being my sister & singing my old songs. I am not a songwriter. Don't be hurt at what I say. I have always liked you better than the others. Please let me continue to do so & do not do something which I should never forgive you for.—Yours affectionately

Fred.

PS. It is the sort of "reclame" I loathe.



Clare Delius with her brother in the garden at Grez, probably in 1924.

One might venture to suggest that this letter illustrates in a nutshell the character of Frederick Delius: outspoken and to the point, yet explaining his reasons in such a way that no-one could find fault with or take offence at. Furthermore, although we do not have the advantage of having heard Clare's voice, there can be little doubt that he was absolutely right in the line he took.

Needless to say, Clare did not go ahead with her plan, but neither did she allow the rebuff to put her off singing altogether, for on 3rd December 1913 she gave another recital in Bradford, this time at the Church Institute. *Abendstimmung* and *Le ciel est par dessus le toit* were

again featured, along with settings of poems by Kjerulf and Shelley, and *The Yorkshire Post* wrote:

"...always, despite the exacting nature of the music, she revealed the right temperament, and by her artistic methods gave interpretations which were entirely sympathetic..."

That she continued to give recitals of her brother's music is evidenced by her participation in a lecture-recital on his music given by Mr. Arthur Ackroyd in Harrogate on 5th March 1930.

According to Clare's biography of her brother, she visited Grez twice during the later years of his life, singing his songs to him on both occasions. The first was in 1924, before he had lost his sight, and the second around 1930, when her piano accompanist was no less a person than Charles Kennedy Scott. It was apparently on this occasion that the composer was so pleased with her singing that he exclaimed that it was a great pity she had not taken it up professionally. In view of his advice of earlier years, that intended compliment fell with an understandable thud. Ironically, it was only a little while afterwards that Clare was interviewed by a newspaper reporter who then published a very garbled version of what she had told him; Delius was furious and a rift was opened up which never healed. A pathetic letter to Clare from Jelka shortly after she was widowed began:

"Give us a kiss and let us forget it all."

Clare Delius's five children consisted of four girls and one boy. The latter enlisted in the army during the First World War, after lying about his age, and was killed shortly before the armistice. One of the girls became famous as Dorothy Black, the novelist, while the youngest was Margaret Vessey, whom I interviewed in *Journal* no. 60 and who died in 1978. Clare herself died in 1954 at the age of eighty-eight.

Some other Delius Descendants

The youngest daughter of the Delius family was Elfrieda, born in 1880 and therefore eighteen years younger than Frederick. She married Colonel Inglefield and one of their children is Miss Eleanor Inglefield who is a long-standing member of the Delius Society. She never met her famous uncle because of the age-gap between him and her mother, but she recalls stories that her mother used to tell of him. When he came home to Bradford his first visit was always to the nursery to see his three youngest sisters; after playing with them for a while he would put his feet up on the table and ring for the maid. Always the rebel, he would then order: "Bring us some buttered toast. We are going to sit with our feet up on the table and eat buttered toast!" It appears that Frederick was not the only brother who was fond of Clare, for she was popular with all the boys. When they were all at home and the three of them went "out on the town" they would return and throw pebbles up to her bedroom window in the small hours of the morning, and Clare would creep downstairs and let them in.



Eleanor Inglefield, like her cousin Dorothy Black, is well-known as a story-writer, specializing in tales of the supernatural which are usually set in Cornwall, where she lives. One of her short stories has just been made the basis of the libretto of a new chamber-opera, *The Woman on the Hill*, by William Lewame Harris, which is to be given its première by Celtic Music-Theatre at the Golden Lane Theatre, Golden Lane, London EC1, on 25th, 26th and 27th September at 7.30 p.m. It will be produced by Peter Lehmann Bedford and have professional principals.

Also in the Delius Society is a granddaughter of Clare, Mrs. Amory Leggatt. Her mother, Claire, was the middle one of Clare Black's five children. The picture above shows the Editor with (from left to right) Mrs. Leggatt, Miss Inglefield and Mrs. Elizabeth Lovibond who is a granddaughter of Frederick's cousin, Daniel Delius, who was an accomplished amateur violinist and came to England to enter the wool trade at around the time of the composer's birth.

Obituary: A. K. Holland, 1892-1980

by Norman Cameron.

It was in August, 1933, at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in Wrexham, that I first encountered A. K. Holland. With a score of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* under his arm, he was deploring the artificially mannered singing of the male voice choir that had just left the platform. Tentatively, encouraged by the Delius score, I approached him: Would he be interested in writing analytical notes for the projected Delius Society recordings? The absorbing conversation that ensued continued, on and off, during the remainder of a week that culminated in an unforgettable performance of *A Mass of Life* (See *Journal* No. 44) and inaugurated a long musical association, occasionally stormy, frequently hilarious, always stimulating and deeply valued.

Arthur Keith Holland, universally known as A. K., was born in London in 1892 and educated at Christ's Hospital and London University. He entered the Civil Service, but soon broke away into journalism, joining *The Liverpool Daily Post* as music critic and, for a while, literary editor, in April 1921. His ready wit and eloquent, often caustic, pen quickly made their mark and what he described as "a cursed Irish pugnacious streak in me of which I am heartily ashamed" stood him in good stead in controversy—inevitable when so outspoken a critic came up against the starched-shirt Philistinism, foreigner-worship and unadventurous programme-making that bedevilled provincial music in the pre-war years.

To combat this sterile outlook and what Sir Donald Tovey had castigated in a recent volume of essays as "the belief that all good music must come from elsewhere", A. K. founded, in 1935, a chamber music club for the performance, by local musicians, of neglected and unfamiliar works. Sir Donald accepted the Presidency and travelled from Edinburgh to contribute a weighty pianoforte recital and a speech of such wit and wisdom as are rarely heard.

Throughout his working life, A. K. championed the cause of our native composers, in particular the music of Delius and Purcell, of whom he published the first modern biographical study, *Henry Purcell: the English Musical Tradition* in 1932. He was an able pianist, and his lecture-recitals were much in demand. These (inevitably) included some interesting Delius programmes with a singer and violinist. During the war, he did valuable work as a lecturer for the Council for Adult Education in H.M. Forces and as a tutor for the Workers' Educational Association.

Opera was another major interest. He directed various amateur productions, including Holst's *Savitri* and Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole* (using his own English translation); *The Beggar's Opera* and its little-known sequel, *Polly*, arranging the original airs for his small orchestra. Perhaps his most ambitious venture was a concert reading of Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, given in the Bluecoat Hall, Liverpool, on 15th December 1933 with seven singers, a violinist to cue in the Dark Fiddler's music, a narrator and A. K. himself at the piano.

Unlikely as it may seem, this devoted effort afforded an illumin-



A. K. Holland, photographed by Norman Cameron at the Welsh National Eisteddfod, Neath, in August 1934.

ating and at times moving experience to an audience knowing little or nothing of the work. The *Liverpool Echo* critic commented: "Coming to it, as one did, with eager curiosity, the performance proved extraordinarily interesting, and it was so well done, within its limitations, that one was frequently able to catch a considerable degree of illusion. Mr. Holland carried out a difficult task with confidence and imagination."

Six months later came a bonus, an opportunity to attend the now legendary private production of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham at the Royal College of Music. Between us, we procured tickets for the first and last nights, and, A. K. having friends at court, we were also privileged to witness the dress rehearsal. It was a magical occasion and nearly thirty years later, when assessing the Bradford Centenary production, A. K. referred to this earlier experience as one he would not easily forget.

His pioneering work for Delius won wide recognition. "We have

been saluting Mr. Holland as our leading authority in this field since the late nineteen-thirties", wrote one reviewer of *The Songs of Frederick Delius*. While working on this study of the songs, which first appeared as a series of articles in *Musical Opinion*, between October 1936 and June 1937, A. K. carried on a fascinating correspondence with Mrs. Delius, who provided much valuable background and suggested a visit to Grez to study unpublished MSS—an invitation he was, unfortunately, unable to accept.

About his notes for the Delius Society recordings he was less happy, despite warm approval from Sir Thomas. "Over the whole thing there is the feeling that this miserable analysis business is quite futile and destructive", he wrote to me, "and I feel very dissatisfied with what I have done. *Paris* impresses me more and more but writing about Delius and still more dissecting him is very painful. But it has got to be done, I suppose, and the idea that he cannot be discussed at all in terms of technique, etc., simply won't wash. Delius is very baffling, because the more you know of him, the less it seems possible to reduce him to a formula."

Such knowledgeable critics as Ernest Newman and Neville Cardus apart, the spate of ignorant and ill-digested pontificating that passed as criticism of Delius's music in the 'thirties was beyond belief, "Did you see the damn silly notice of the Delius album in *The Musical Times*?" wrote A. K. in exasperation. "This sort of cant makes me boil—*Paris* is not Delius: he can't score and can't write for the voice. What the hell could he do according to these pundits?"

And again: "At all costs, one ought to try to kill the nonsense put about by your Hulls [Robert Hull, author of a sketchy and ill-informed pamphlet] that he is a limited composer and that the idylls are "the characteristic Delius". That is sheer ignorance. Perhaps *Arabesk* is more characteristic and yet unique. I exalt him as the greatest artistic creator since Wagner and less mannered than any modern composer despite a fairly consistent idiom. Yet how rich and varied is even his harmony. He is much more limited *melodically* and his sign is written in figures and shapes of melody rather than in the harmonic resources of which only a few tricks have been extracted by his critics and imitators.

"Delius enlarges the poetic vision and makes you conscious of something greater than temporary values. He is a sensuous composer and can bring to mind an image and even a scene. The physical scene, however, is not important in comparison with the revelation of an inner experience....."

To A. K., the "inner experience" was all-important, in music and in life. He was a private and elusive personality, though in his lighter moods he could be the best of good company. His friends regretted, but should not have been surprised by, his wish, on retirement in 1968, to live as a recluse in Wales. Sadly, his last years were spent in a wheelchair, crippled with arthritis, but according to a kindly Welfare Officer who visited him from time to time, he remained peacefully absorbed in his books and music. He died on January 21st of this year, after only two days in hospital. He was eighty-seven years old.

Delius on Record

by LYNDON JENKINS.

Since I last reviewed new Delius records there have been two issues of major significance: the first-ever recording of the complete score of the Incidental Music to *Hassan* (HMV ASD777, £5.40), and Volume Two of the Beecham recording (World Records SHB54, 6 mono discs, £19.50 though still available at about £6 less in certain London record stores).

The *Hassan* disc is particularly welcome because, incomparable as was Beecham's old CBS version (61224: now deleted) with its twelve selected numbers inimitably and magically phrased, this new issue presents a much nearer approximation of what Delius's 26-piece pit ensemble must have sounded like; besides, here we have all the music, much of it never previously recorded or only available via an inimical pair of 1924 78s. Some of the unfamiliar passages are attractively picturesque, and a surprise is a beautiful strings-and-wind version of the celebrated *Serenade*. Vernon Handley persuades his singers to enter into the spirit of the thing and directs the Bournemouth Sinfonietta sympathetically and convincingly; just occasionally standards of execution slip, and the balance is not always impeccable, but on the whole this is a very worthy presentation of an elusive score. Not the least of the disc's attractions are Dawn Redwood's splendidly comprehensive sleeve-notes.

The Beecham box is notable not only for restoring some famous performances generally unavailable for a long time but publishing new ones as well. All the fresh material is of great interest, particularly perhaps the two orchestrally-accompanied songs *Heimkehr* and *Twilight Fancies* (still wearing the superfluous 'When', incidentally) and the *Second Dance Rhapsody*, a more fanciful reading than the later stereo one (HMV ASD329, HQS1126 or SXL P30415). The two other songs, *Whither* and *The Violet*, are slightly better done in my view by Dora Labbette in Volume One. Beecham's account of *Paa Vidderne* is surely as definitive as can be, something that cannot be said of his 1946 version of *Songs of Sunset*, which anyway suffers severely by the omission ('because of technical difficulties') of the gloriously ripe duet 'Cease smiling, Dear'. Incidentally, World Records have made a mess of their booklet description of Record 5, giving the impression (a) that *Paa Vidderne* is a song, and (b) by transposing the 'Orch. Sandheimer' away from *Heimkehr* where it rightly belongs.

There are also some lovely things in the performances previously available only on 78s or in America. *Summer Night on the River*, *Summer Evening* and *A Song before Sunrise* originally appeared on four 78 sides (HMV DB9757/8) where the artistic price of an inexpensive layout was a break in each work. The performances are peerless: just listen to the easy movement of *Summer Night*, while this version of *Song before Sunrise* to my mind obeys Delius's injunction 'Freshly' to better effect than any other; that Beecham's contemporary *First Cuckoo* lacked magic alongside these should be obvious to anyone. The *Irmelin Prelude* and *Marche Caprice* originally occupied the

final sides of the Violin and Piano Concerto sets; the former displays some marvellously calculated *rubato* within a steady beat, while the swift and airy *Marche* makes the LP remake (HMV ASD357) sound earthbound.

The disadvantages of the *Brigg Fair* and *Song of the High Hills* performances are solely those attendant upon the restricted sound of the 78; perhaps Sir Thomas is not at his absolutely magical best in the Rhapsody but the *High Hills* is a magnificent achievement from the structural point of view, especially when one reflects that it was recorded in 4-minute sections. Needless to say, it is uncut (see John White's article in *Journal No. 67*) nor need it be; on the other hand an excision of 11 bars in the *Dance Rhapsody No. 1* is no great disadvantage. The two Concerto recordings I have dealt with in comparative articles before: I still feel the Pougnet/Beecham idiomatically stronger and superior in terms of structure to the Sammons/Sargent, and that the Humby-Beecham Piano Concerto yields in all respects except the orchestral to the Moiseiwitsch/Lambert HMV 78 set. (N.B. World Records handily couple these two non-Beecham performances together on a separate disc).

The major attraction of the whole box, of course, is the complete *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, Beecham's only Delius opera recording. Those who felt that the major shortcoming of the recent ENON revival lay in the orchestral playing should achieve their heart's desire here, and it would be an extended pleasure to draw your attention to countless felicities in the orchestral part and even more on the conductor's part. The spell that I came under twenty years ago when Rodney Meadows lent me his two volumes of 78s (with their labels quaintly bearing the first words on each new side: "Well, well, gracious me....." and so on) enchants me still, and his wise injunction to "Try Scene IV first" was in my mind again recently when in a review of the present reissue I wrote "If you can resist Scene IV Delius is not for you."

The singing, of course, is not ideal yet its shortcomings have never even remotely approached spoiling the set for me. Personally, I find the voice of Rene Soames, who was a very widely experienced microphone artist, acceptable, the other principals less so, but partly the fault lies in poor balancing and overloaded recording. Obviously Sir Thomas had to compromise quite a lot during those sessions in May 1948 (not 1949 as the booklet suggests) and who is to say he was satisfied with the overall achievement at the end? So whatever individual criticisms may be levelled at it, the fact remains that here is a Delius opera played and sung with ardour, passion, thoughtfulness and with all the tenderness in the world, and incomparably interpreted by the main artistic driving force involved in the proceedings.

I have drawn attention in passing to a few carelessnesses in the box's accompanying booklet, but a sad omission is the name of Eric Fenby, whose fine analysis of the opera which accompanied the original 78s is now reprinted, but without acknowledgement.

Delius Society AGM at Leeds, May 31-June 1 1980

Having a Chairman who can arrange a 1st class train compartment from Kings Cross to Leeds (and back), combined with a night's stay at the British Transport Queens Hotel in Leeds has its advantages—unique advantages, for without Rodney Meadows's organisation the prohibitive cost of rail travel, but more particularly hotel accomodation, would have made the Leeds trip impossible.

The Southern Contingent met on Saturday 31st May to catch the 10.50 from Kings Cross to Leeds. The pouring rain didn't deter some of us exploring Leeds for its native alb before attending what was in itself a VERY well attended AGM in one of the hotel's business rooms. 45 members supported us. After a quick cup of tea, Felix Aprahamian took the place of Dr. Fenby to elucidate on *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (reviewed elsewhere in this *Journal*).

We must thank Frank Wilson for his bright idea to invade Nash's Fish Restaurant opposite the Grand Opera House after the opera because it meant we could all squeeze into the schedule a meal which some called the Annual Dinner.

After a marvellous night's sleep we met for breakfast where we carried on the discussions (and arguments) of the previous night's viewing and listening. We then trooped off with our B. R. guide to catch the 10.25 train to Bradford, where Philip Jones was waiting to take us on a lightning tour of the Delius landmarks (or remains thereof). We walked from the station up to Claremont, passing the site of the proposed Delius Centre and some of the typical buildings which Delius and his family would have been familiar with, such as the Corn Exchange. We paused a long while outside number 6, the rented house which was the birthplace. We looked across the road and saw only the site of the Delius home, as it was demolished some fifteen years ago to accommodate a petrol station and van-hire firm. He first lived at number 3 Claremont and when number 1 became vacant Julius purchased it. Having been shown the remaining properties, the double-fronted detached house 1-3 must have been very gracious indeed. We then walked away from the University and Claremont to a narrow road where Philip showed us the tiny terraced house which he considers to be Delius's first school. The twenty-two of us had, by this time, attracted the attention of the residents who appeared on door steps, behind net curtains and one who was obviously very concerned with the intrusion, appeared at a sky-light and didn't go away until after our departure down the hill. We visited Julius Delius's warehouse and just made it back to our train at 12.25. We all enjoyed the walk and our thanks to Philip for preparing it.

We gathered at the hotel for a snack lunch before catching our high-speed train back to London. While we must thank Lyndon Jenkins for arranging the tickets for the opera, the Committee for experimenting with a non-London venue for the AGM, particular thanks have to go to Rodney Meadows for the travel and sleeping arrangements.

D.R.

“A Village Romeo and Juliet” at Leeds, 31st May 1980

It is nearly twenty years since *A Village Romeo and Juliet* has been presented upon the stage in England—time enough for there to be a good few members of the Delius Society who have never seen a production of it—and therefore the English National Opera North's inclusion of it in their 1980 summer tour was very much to be welcomed. The committee's notion of holding the AGM in Leeds to coincide with one of the performances was also a good one, to judge from the number of members who attended both events.

The opening of this opera must be one of the most difficult for the producer to handle: what practical man of the theatre would raise the curtain on two ploughed fields with a strip of wild land between, and then ask his first two singers to appear with a plough and horse to match? At Leeds the problem was solved adeptly by brown wooden strips suspended on either side of the stage, symbolic of the ploughed fields if not literal. One of Our Learned Critics said it reminded him of a sauna bath, while a Prominent Member rightly lamented the complete absence of greenery, but the two singers enunciated well and the one with the plough looked as if he knew how to handle it, which is what matters.

The stage, very small by London standards, was steeply raked and the whole action played behind a gauze. The only purpose of the latter, so far as I could see, was to allow some rather dubious cloud effects between scenes. It might have added to the ‘far away’ nature of the tale but, in the event, did not. The farmhouse, in keeping with the rest of the scenery in the early pictures, was kept bare and simple.

The production, in fact, was pleasantly unobtrusive until the Dream Wedding was reached. Here an old, rugged cross (so rugged that it threatened to topple over) appeared at the back of the stage, emblazoned with light, later rising, still askew, to a semi-Heavenly position. The effect was positively Black Massive, which might arguably have been valid had it not been for the fact that by the time the hymn began the ideas ran out and we fell back upon some rather fey dancing and a blasphemous representation of the Eucharist with the Dark Fiddler presiding. The latter also featured in the American production and Alan Blyth (writing in *The Daily Telegraph*) felt that Delius would surely not have approved of it. I fail to see why. As an atheist he had no reason to be offended by it, particularly as he had tried to emulate Christian music in the hymn, and dramatically it works well to have the Dark Fiddler officiating at the wedding ceremony. (It was an equally good idea to have the Fiddler on stage during the prelude to the opera.) The same critic saw fit to correct Robert Threlfall's reference in his programme-note to the 1972 production in America, claiming that it took place a year earlier. One does wish that critics writing from memory would resist such arrogant amendments to carefully-researched fact. The date of the US première was 26th April 1972.

I found the Dream Scene unsatisfactory for three reasons: firstly because it presented an unsatisfactory ambiguity between Black Mass and orthodox service; secondly because what the lovers experience is a naive dream, nothing more or less than their own (presumably Christian) marriage in the village church. Had they dreamed what I have described above, they would surely have no longer been so keen to get spliced! The third reason is that so much was made of this scene after three very simple and static ones that it took on an importance greater than it justifies.

After the interval the Fair scene was well produced, with just the right number of side-shows, including a real wheel-of-fortune. The final scene, however, gave little indication of the deserted inn and was generally unconvincing. At this point the sole, but serious, drawback of the raked stage became apparent, for the barge had to appear at the top of a hill (a viaduct, perhaps?) and certainly to anyone sitting in the stalls the sinking of the boat was of minimal effect. I well remember the 1962 performances at Sadler's Wells Theatre, of which I attended four out of six, three of them in the gallery, from which one could identify fully with the ecstatic *liebested*.

Without doubt the most effective singing and acting came from Stuart Harling as the Dark Fiddler, although he has the kind of voice which meanders around the note before finally settling. Adrian Martin, as Sali, had a thin, rather metallic voice and although he sang accurately his limited acting seemed more suited to musical comedy than the opera-house. Laureen Livingstone sang quite well as Vrenchen but, like her opposite number, failed to arouse any sympathy in this viewer. The love-duet in the third scene passed almost unnoticed, while that in the last was not much more successful—partly because the lovers did not look convincing.

Much of the blame must lie with the conductor, David Lloyd-Jones, who displayed little instinct for Delius's music and failed to extract from his young orchestra anything like a Delius sound. That the string-tone was lightweight was probably not his fault, and he was further handicapped by a breathy flute, an off-pitch horn and a woolly-sounding trumpet. Most of all we missed the woodwind phrasing and subtleties of beat which are such an integral part of this music.

All in all, then, a production one was grateful for the opportunity to see and grateful to the Delius Trust for so generously supporting, but not one which will remain in the memory for a very long time.

C.W.R.

“A Mass of Life” at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, 17th May 1980

Attending a provincial performance of *A Mass of Life* is always an experience which causes some apprehension. When a loudspeaker announcement is made shortly before the start to the effect that the tenor has been replaced at twenty-four hours' notice and a new baritone

has also had to be procured and given ten days in which to learn the part, that apprehension tends to increase. It is therefore very good to be able to report that the two late recruits coped more than adequately and that the performance was one of the most satisfying that I have attended. The tenor, Kenneth Woollam, had sung the part at Guildford seven years ago (see *Journal* no. 41); the new baritone was Rodney McCann, a name unfamiliar in Delius performances, but one which I very much hope to hear more of in the future. His voice is not unlike that of Benjamin Luxon, although lacking as yet the power in the louder passages and the sense of drama. For the record, the other two singers were Wendy Eathorne (soprano) and Margaret Duckworth (contralto), with the Croydon Philharmonic Choir and English Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Gaddarn.

The choir was an impressive body of nearly two hundred voices, and although the average age was probably on the wrong side of forty the sound they produced was agreeably fresh. To be sure, they lacked weight in fortissimo passages and the top notes were not as thrilling as one hopes for, but to some extent this was due to the orchestra being generally too loud. (Incidentally, the new reduced orchestration was *not* used on this occasion, contrary to information supplied in our last issue.) Normally this would be a matter for complaint, but fortunately the orchestra on this occasion was so competent and thoroughly rehearsed that one could overlook the fact. Outstanding was the oboe of Roger Wingfield and the flute of Averill Williams; one's only mis-giving was a certain woolliness of the conductor's beat which led more than once to sloppy ensemble. But let me not carp at James Gaddarn's handling of the work: in general he controlled the performance admirably and had clear ideas of the way the piece should go. I was disappointed to miss the slight holding-back of tempo at the *maestoso* of the opening movement, but the speed of the second was one of the quickest I have heard without spoiling the effect. He also kept the music moving through the middle movements of Part II, where so many conductors permit turgidity to take over. A most pleasing evening, then, which, aided by a hall with a more satisfactory acoustic, could be compared favourably with last October's offering at Norwich.

A number of Delius Society members attended, although it has to be admitted that those taking advantage of the booking facilities offered in the January *Journal* was pitifully few. It is difficult to see why this should be, given the calibre of the artists participating and the accessibility of the Fairfield Halls in an area where many members live. One is tempted to ask what point there is in Dr. Fenby going to the trouble of reducing the orchestration in order to place the work within the scope of choral societies if even Delius Society members cannot be persuaded to attend. Or is it the case, as one prominent Delian remarked to me, that the *Mass* has been performed too much recently and is in danger of over-exposure?

20th Jacksonville Delius Festival

by ROBERT THRELFALL

It is a desirable antidote to complacency to observe that annual Festivals devoted primarily to the work of Frederick Delius have been taking place in Jacksonville, Florida, for longer than our own Delius Society based in London has been in existence. Previous to 1961 an annual concert dedicated to Delius's memory had been given, but that year the Delius Association of Florida was formed and the celebrations were extended to a Festival; it was sufficiently successful to become an annual and week-long event, and perusal of the programmes covering the subsequent twenty years is both interesting and informative.

In 1979 it was my privilege to be invited to Jacksonville to take an active part in that year's Festival. Four public (and two private) appearances during the week, plus innumerable and delightful social engagements, may seem a hectic programme to have undertaken; but one had quickly become conditioned by a visit *en route* to Philadelphia, where three lectures were scheduled and given in one day. Last year, then, I was perhaps too closely involved to write appropriately about the Festival; this year it was my great pleasure to be present once again, but as a guest. Let me endeavour to communicate to other members in turn a little of this pleasure.

The 1980 Festival was appropriately dedicated to the memory of Miriam Emanuel: she and Philip had first attended the Festivals in the early 'sixties and continued their visits with regularity during the remaining years of health they were granted. Miriam's daughters, Jean Rose and Shirley Arkush, visited Jacksonville for the first time this year and it must have been an enjoyable, if sometimes emotional, week for them both. Major Norman Millar, debarred from attending several previous years by ill-health, was happily present in 1980; so was a contingent from Philadelphia headed by the indefatigable Bill Marsh; so also was Thomas Holliday from Texas (where he is in the throes of producing *Koanga* this year and, it is to be hoped, *The Magic Fountain* next). Regrettably, Eric and Rowena Fenby, who had planned to attend once again, had to abandon their trip at the last moment in view of concern over Eric's health.

For a decade or more, a Composition Contest has taken place during the Festival: this year the Award Concert opened celebrations on 13th March. Out of 125 entries received from all over the USA, six extremely varied contributions formed the core of a programme which, incidentally, also showed the high quality of performance we may expect from the front chairs of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. The prize-winning work was by Zelman Bokser, first violist, and it was performed by the Jacksonville Symphony String Quartet (of which he is a member).

Concerts were being given by the Friday Musicale, I believe, even before Delius ever visited Jacksonville: now, no Festival is complete without its contribution from that organization. This year their presentation took the form of an attractive song recital given by the soprano Jeannette Ferrell. Framed by French songs, a substantial group of early songs by Delius was of particular interest to myself, inasmuch as the

Five Songs from the Danish, first published in the 'Galliard' album in 1973, were included complete. To hear these songs so intelligently presented withal, from a seat amongst the audience for the first time, was a pleasure indeed.

On Saturday 15th March a showing of the famous Ken Russell film took place at the Haydon Burns Library. The utter truth of this document, which unfailingly makes its effect at the first or at the umpteenth viewing, is a remarkable tribute to that unique association between composer and amanuensis from which so much has flowed in the years since. Later that same evening the 1980 Festival Banquet, a glittering occasion in every way, was held in the equally glittering surroundings of the Florida Yacht Club. After the meal, a Symposium on *Sea Drift*, to be the central work of this year's Festival, brought librarian Jeff Driggers, conductor Willis Page and myself together. Taking a hint from Beecham's description of the poem on which the work is based as one of the most beautiful in the language, Tom Holliday read Walt Whitman's lines as an introduction to the subsequent discussion of various aspects of the work; and this he did with due gravity and subtlety of inflection.

Sunday 16th March was free from official fixtures; however, two separate groups took the opportunity of a day exceptionally fine even by Florida standards to visit Solano Grove and St. Augustine, some even drinking the waters of the Fountain of Youth (to no evident discomfort) *en route*. On Monday and Tuesday, 17th and 18th March, the Festival reached the climax which had been planned for so long; the performance of *Sea Drift* included by the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra during this, its 30th season, in a Beecham-like programme which also featured Mozart's *Paris* Symphony, *Siegfried's Journey to the Rhine*, and Chabrier's *Espana*. For *Sea Drift*, John Shirley-Quirk had been specially engaged, and his well-known rendering of the work was ably supported by the well-trained (and augmented) University Singers and the Orchestra. Maestro Page had obviously put considerable study into the complex score and as a result of his conviction a well-controlled reading, which flowed from start to finish without dragging, was ensured. The brilliance of the Mozart and Chabrier items (Delius would certainly have approved the latter if not the former!) gave a vivacious contrast. So too did the closing item, a *Suite Flamenco* for guitar and orchestra played with authentic magic by its veteran composer, Carlos Mantoya.

I have left myself no space to mention many of the other delightful moments in which Delius Festivals at Jacksonville abound: the renewal of old friendships; the making of new ones; "unofficial" chamber music-making; above all the warmth and generosity of American hospitality, never to be imagined by those who have not experienced it, never to be forgotten by those who have. For the assembly of all these things, more or less, we are indebted to the genius of that strange man who once, in his early wanderings, settled there beside that most noble river. Those of us who have stood where he then stood, even these many years after, can understand a little the magic it wrought in a mind such as his.

News from the Midlands

Midlands Branch Meeting, 15th March 1980

An evening a little apart from the Delian tradition was enjoyed by Midlands Branch members at the home of Peter and Margaret Trotman in Nottingham on Saturday 15th March. It proved to be a stimulating and entertaining occasion, with inner and outer man amply provided for.

Combining the rôles of host and tutor, Peter gave us a rare insight into the late Victorian world. His subject a man of brilliant scholarship, whose first in classical moderations at Oxford was followed by disastrous failure in Greats; whose lowly position at the patent Office in London left time for patient study at the British Museum; and whose authoritative pamphlets for the Philological Society and other learned bodies culminated in a professorship at thirty-three: thus A. E. Housman, a name now immediately associated with *A Shropshire Lad*, but whose poetry was ever a private and personal diversion.

The resumé of Housman's early life shed light on the thoughts and feelings behind *A Shropshire Lad*. His position as the eldest of a large well-to-do family, brought up in the heart of rural England, was transformed by the early loss of his mother and the subsequent decline of his father. Never an outgoing personality, Housman withdrew into a closed world of earnest study, showing an austerity of spirit in inter-personal relations and a looming homosexual preference from his student years on. These elements, together with a yearning for the changeless countryside of childhood, combined to undertow the verses of his poetry with currents of sadness and despair. The "land of lost content", evoked by place-names that were in all probability a little beyond Housman's home environs and familiarity, a landscape coloured and enhanced by distance of time and place, and the stage for lusty dramas of youth, proved irresistible to composers over the whole span of the poet's era. Neatly weaving into the fabric of his talk a series of settings of Housman's poems, Peter was able to give us the principal examples of this range and also provide a hearing of some lesser-known works.

From among the Edwardians, brief passages were played of Somervell, Balfour Gardiner, Ivor Gurney and Graham Peel—the last commended for his retention of the 3/4 metre of *Bredon Hill*. Gurney's earlier cycle, *Western Playland* (1908), sensitive and flexible, contrasted with the freshness of *Ludlow & Teme* (c1919), though here his use of string quartet with the piano seemed an unnecessary device. Later works included a privately recorded setting by Bax (a tribute to home talents), while other interesting examples were of C. W. Orr, E. J. Moeran, John Ireland and John Rayner.

The major musical features were two settings by George Butterworth and three by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Butterworth's *Loveliest of Trees* was followed by his memorable version of *Bredon Hill*—the mood set first by a summery accompaniment but swiftly converted by chill descending chords to the dull resignation of "I will come" at the last, (this final phrase so often a problem of interpretation). The bleak turbulence

of *On Wenlock Edge*, (Vaughan Williams' cycle of the same name), gave way to the tranquillity of *From far, from eve and morning*. Finally a little-known orchestral version of *Bredon Hill* marked a contrast with other settings we had already heard—myriads of sounds forming a complicated matrix for the vocal line. Here the real difficulty of putting Housman to music was pointed: how to convey, without obliterating the natural simplicity of words and metre, the deeper-lying moods and tensions. For those who follow Housman's language, the romantic approach is superficial; yet too great a musical complexity destroys the delicate fabric of the stanzas. The dilemma is clear—and fascinating.

E. E. Rowe.

A CENTENARY TRIBUTE TO CYRIL SCOTT

On Saturday 7th June 1980 the Midlands Branch held its final meeting of the season at the Weston Underwood home of Clive and Edith Bemrose, where they were addressed by Stephen Lloyd on the subject of Cyril Meir Scott (1879-1970), composer, poet, philosopher and humorist. The original version of the talk was given to the London branch on 25th March but Stephen was able to deliver a slightly more informal version, including a few anecdotes and comments only suitable for an intimate gathering! (Whatever do they get up to in these outlandish areas?—Editor).

Connections with Delius were apparently rather tenuous, both in the form of his late music and also personally, although Scott himself records that Fredrick described his *Deuxième Suite* for piano as 'fine, strong stuff'. Stephen traced his early life, the 'Frankfurt Gang' and their interactions, playing excerpts from both orchestral and solo instrumental works, comparing musical styles such as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Scott's *Festival Overture*, songs where the influence of Stefan George and Ernest Dowson were clear and a mixed quotation where Scott's first Piano Sonata was cleverly extended into Grainger's *Hill Song No. 1* arranged for piano and, as certain advertisements state, no-one could see the join! Two versions of Scott's *Danse Negre* were played, one by the composer and the other by Grainger, both, as Stephen said, equally valid interpretations.

We heard of Scott's vegetarian diet, his interest in yoga and spiritualism and his habit of retiring in the afternoons with a notice on his bedroom door 'Do not disturb—I am in astral slumber'. His marriage to Rose Allatini and their mutual interests were mentioned and the talk concluded with reference to his one-time very popular piano pieces and songs, concluding with his descriptive piano piece, *Rainbow Trout*.

Summing up—with his use of irregular barring, lack of a 'home' key and the frequent lack of a central theme, Scott is a composer who requires the listener to search him out, much of his work repaying a closer study than most of those composers who have a measure of instantaneous appeal. A comment by Scott on his first Piano Concerto: "It is as if Scarlatti had lived in China" probably illustrates the enigma of the man and his later style very well!

Dick Kitching expressed the thanks of the listeners for a fascinating talk on a little-known composer, and the assembled company were then treated to a superb buffet supper by our hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Bemrose, to whom go our thanks for their warm hospitality.

Brian Radford.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

22nd August at 8 p.m.

At the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, performance of *Sea Drift* by Thomas Allen with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis. Programme also includes *Ritual Dances* (Tippett) and Symphony No. 8 (Dvorak).

25th August at 7.30 p.m.

At the Albert Hall, London, Julian Lloyd-Webber plays the Delius 'Cello Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder (See Editorial).

13th September at 7.30 p.m.

At the Albert Hall, London, ('Last Night of the Proms') *Sea Drift* sung by Brian Rayner Cook with the BBC Singers and Chorus and BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Mackerras. Programme also includes *Tintagel* (Bax) and other British music.

The last two events are subject to industrial action by the Musicians' Union.

16th September at 7 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at the British Music Information Centre, 10 Stratford Place, London WC1. John Bishop takes 'A Second look at the Music of Frank Bridge'.

30th October at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobald Road, London WC1. 'Composer's Choice—Music by Composers of whom Delius might have approved!' presented and played by Robert Threlfall.

12th December at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society meeting in Room 7, Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1 (five minutes' walk from either Euston or Russell Square underground stations). An evening with Norman Del Mar.

29th January 1981 at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, London WC1. A Delius Birthday Evening with Dr. Eric Fenby.

24th February 1981 at 7 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at the British Music Information Centre, 10 Stratford Place, London WC1. Programme presented by Lyndon Jenkins.

25th March 1981 at 7 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at the British Music Information Centre, 10 Stratford Place, London WC1. 'Gerald Finzi and his contemporaries'—a 25th anniversary programme presented by Michael Salmon.

11th April 1981 at 7.45 p.m.

In the Civic Hall, Guildford, Hugh Bean plays the Delius Violin Concerto with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley. Programme also includes *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (Ravel) and Symphony No. 3 (Rachmaninov).

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